United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement, expresses concern at reports of recent fighting in Croatia; warns of grave threat to Geneva peace process and overall stability in former Yugoslavia; calls on Croatian and Serbian sides to accept cease-fire proposed by UNPROFOR.

+ Security Council expresses concern over reports that Bosnian Croats are detaining Bosnian Muslims in deplorable conditions; calls on Croatian Government to use its influence to resolve situation.

+ Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend UNAVEM II's mandate for three months in order to continue mediation efforts in Angola; urges Angolan Government and UNITA to resume peace talks, stressing grave humanitarian situation.

+ Secretary-General to meet today with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

+ General Assembly decides to pay for UNFICYP with Members assessed contributions, ending voluntary financing of Operation; authorizes Secretary-General to commit up to $500,000 for initial activities of Tribunal on violations of international humanitarian law in former Yugoslavia.

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The Security Council today expressed profound concern at reports from the United Nations Secretariat of recent fighting in Croatia, in particular at the escalation of the means employed, and the grave threat posed to the Geneva peace process and to overall stability in the former Yugoslavia.

In a statement read out by its President, Adolfo Raul Taylhardat (Venezuela), the Council reaffirmed its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia, and called on both sides to accept the proposal by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) of an immediate cease-fire. The Council called on the Croatian Government to

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withdraw its armed forces to positions occupied before 9 September, on the basis of that proposal, and called on the Serbian forces to halt all provocative military actions.

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In another Presidential statement read out this afternoon, the Security Council expressed profound concern over reports that Bosnian Croats have been holding Bosnian Muslims in detention camps under deplorable conditions. The Council recalled the international revulsion and condemnation that had accompanied revelations last year of the conditions under which Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats were being held in Bosnian Serb detention camps.

The Council reiterated the principle that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must be given access to all detainees in Bosnia and Herzegovina wherever they might be held. It called on the Bosnian Croats to give the ICRC information on all camps where prisoners were being held, and to assure the ICRC and other legitimately concerned international bodies of free and unhindered access to detainees. The Council emphasized that inhumane treatment and abuses in detention centres violated international humanitarian law, and reiterated that persons who committed, or ordered the commission of, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions were individually responsible for them.

The Council said that the Croatian Government had a responsibility to use its influence with the Bosnian Croats to secure compliance with its statement, and called on the Government to take immediate steps to that end. The Council also reaffirmed that all parties to the conflict were bound to comply with international humanitarian law and in particular the Geneva Conventions, and reminded them of its willingness to consider appropriate actions if any of them failed to abide scrupulously by their obligations.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) for three months to mid-December to allow it to continue its mediation efforts. In a report on UNAVEM II dated 13 September, the Secretary-General said he was deeply distressed that the fighting in Angola had intensified in recent months and that peace negotiations had not been resumed. He recommended that the Council confirm its readiness to substantially expand the United Nations presence in the country in the event of significant progress in the peace process.

The Secretary-General stressed that an effective and lasting peace could not be achieved through military force, and strongly urged the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to resume negotiations without delay. He drew attention to the grave humanitarian situation in the country, where some 3 million people were

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suffering and more than 1,000 were dying every day because of the war -- the highest fatality rate of any conflict in the world. An immediate cease-fire would permit the distribution of desperately needed humanitarian assistance.

UNAVEM II lacked sufficient international civilian staff to effectively carry out its mandate, especially with the recent intensification of its mediation and good offices activities, according to the report. The number of such staff should be increased from the current 43 to at least 59, the level in April-May.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is expected to meet this evening at Headquarters with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General yesterday attended the signing of a Peace Agreement between the PLO and the Government of Israel in Washington D.C.

To support the momentum of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and in response to requests from the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, Mr. Boutros-Ghali last week established a high-level Task Force to focus on the economic and social development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the two areas designated for Palestinian self-rule under the Peace Agreement.

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The General Assembly decided this morning that the cost of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) from 16 June 1993 will be treated as an expense of the Organization, to be borne by Member States. This is the first time that the Force, previously the only peace-keeping operation to be financed voluntarily, will be financed by assessed contributions. The Assembly, acting on a series of recommendations by its Fifth Committee with regard to funding peace-keeping operations, appropriated $8,771,000 for UNFICYP for the period from 16 June to 15 December 1993.

The Assembly also decided that the administrative, budgetary and management aspects of the financing of peace-keeping operations should be reviewed urgently to improve their efficiency.

Amongst other decisions taken today, the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to commit up to $500,000 for the initial activities of the International Tribunal for the prosecution of serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the former Yugoslavia.

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